

John Knoblock and Jeffrey Riegel. *Mozi: A Study and Translation of the Ethical and Political Writings*. China Research Monograph 68. Berkeley: University of California, Institute of East Asian Studies, 2013. xvi, 501 pp. Softcover \$40.00, ISBN 978-1-55729-103-5.

Good news for the increasing number of scholars who are convinced that the *Mozi* is, as Jeffrey Riegel puts it, “an anthology of enormous scope and great importance,” containing “the earliest extended philosophical discourse in China on a remarkably varied set of topics” (p. ix). During the last few years, several English translations of the *Mozi* have seen the light: in 2010 the first complete *Mozi* translation by Ian Johnston came out, which is very useful for its comprehensiveness,<sup>1</sup> after the partial translations of Mei Yi-pao (1929), Burton Watson (1963), and Angus Graham (1978).<sup>2</sup> In the meanwhile, Jeffrey Riegel had been working on a study and partial translation based of a draft manuscript that he discovered on the computer of his erstwhile friend and collaborator, John Knoblock (1938–1999). Riegel worked for more than a decade on the translation of the “ethical and political writings” parts of the *Mozi*, namely the seven opening chapters or syncretic writings (chapters 1–7, group 1), the core (or triad) chapters containing the Ten Doctrines (chapters 8–37, group 2), and the dialogues or Mohist Analects (chapters 46–50), which form group 3 together with “Condemn the Ru” (chapter 39). The translation does not contain the dialectical chapters (chapters 40–45) nor the defense chapters (chapters 52–71), two groups of writings that are extremely difficult to reconstruct and interpret because of their technical content and textual corruption. The result of Riegel’s work is a very thorough overview of *Mozi* research and a careful translation of no less than thirty-six of its chapters (seven opening chapters, the twenty-three preserved core chapters, “Fei ru,” and the five dialogue chapters).

The lengthy introduction contains a wealth of information on *Mozi* scholarship, such as the various portrayals of Mozi, the Mohist school, the book *Mozi*, the fate of Mohism after the Zhou dynasty, and finally a summary of the thought contained in the translated chapters. In this introduction Riegel offers a detailed overview of up-to-date research, without always taking a position. The portrayals of Mozi discuss Mo Di’s dates and birthplace, his relation to Confucius, his connection with Yu the Great of the Xia dynasty, and his portrayal as a magician. The last is related to Mozi’s afterlife as an immortal in later Daoist sources, but I am not convinced by Riegel that the book *Mozi* itself gives enough textual support for this portrayal (pp. 3–4).<sup>3</sup> Under the heading of the Mohist school, the author briefly discusses the three branches of Mohism, the first-generation disciples, the Grand Master, and the Mohist community. He speculates that the “bie Mo” 別墨 mentioned in *Zhuangzi* “Tianxia” 天下 was not used by Mohists of the different branches to label each other as “deviating Mohists,” but was rather inspired by the general Mohist rejection of partiality; hence “partial Mohists” as opposed to the

universal or inclusive 兼 ones (pp. 8–9). As for the creation of the book *Mozi*, Riegel leaves space for a wide variety of possible scenarios, which is to be applauded considering our very limited knowledge concerning pre-Han texts, especially the *Mozi*.<sup>4</sup> He points out that the book was composed by anonymous authors over a period of several centuries (from the late fifth until the late third century B.C.E.), and that “the seeds of the text’s philosophy, embedded in most of its chapters, are the teachings, slogans, and arguments of Mo Di, or Master Mo” (p. xi). Referring to Watanabe Takashi (1912–1977), Riegel identifies the triad chapters as the oldest part of the book—ranging from “Impartial Love, Upper” (Jian ai shang) to “Explaining Ghosts, Lower” (Ming gui xia)—followed by the seven syncretic chapters and the five Mohist dialogues, roughly dated around the third century B.C.E. Regarding the compilation of the entire *Mozi*, Riegel follows the consensus hypothesis of attributing the redaction of the *Mozi* to the Han court bibliographer Liu Xiang (79–6 B.C.E.) (pp. 14–15).<sup>5</sup>

The translation of the ethical and political chapters contains the Chinese text, extensive annotation, and detailed reflections on the content. Compared to existing translations, the author aimed at “providing a more detailed and authoritative analysis of textual problems, more thorough identification of personal names, place-names, and technical terms, and more comprehensive introductory materials” (p. xiv). He certainly succeeded in doing this: the result is a carefully made and well-documented translation. Rather than mentioning some minor points of disagreement, I will point out one weak point of this book, which amounts to a contradiction between the general introduction on the one hand (more specifically table 3 on pp. 34–35) and the introductory sections in the translation on the other hand. Readers will be confused by Riegel’s dating of the various *Mozi* chapters, for which he mostly (but not uncritically) relies on Watanabe Takashi’s groundbreaking work, “whose analysis of the core chapters is by far the most comprehensive and detailed of any modern scholar” (p. 33). The problem is that Riegel attributes very different dates to exactly the same chapters in various parts of his book. For instance, in table 3, the consecutive “Jian ai” chapters are dated in the fourth century B.C.E., respectively, ca. 380, ca. 350, and ca. 310 (p. 34). But in the introduction to the “Impartial Love” 兼愛 triad, the same three chapters are dated—also according to Watanabe!—in the early fifth century, the mid- to late fourth century, and the middle of the third century (p. 142). The discrepancies are substantive, unexplained, and occur for the other triads too.<sup>6</sup> The least one can say is that this is confusing.

In almost all other respects I find this study and translation initiated by John Knoblock and completed by Jeffrey Riegel truly impressive: it is a wonderful compendium of knowledge on *Mozi* and Mohism throughout Chinese history. It is often more informative than argumentative, sometimes reflecting on different views, offering well-balanced opinions, pointing at subtle variations, making connections with other sources (especially the *Lüshi chunqiu*), and providing

reliable translations. In many ways this is the most useful (and affordable) *Mozi* book that has come out in the last decades.

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#### NOTES

1. See Ian Johnston, *The Mozi: A Complete Translation* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2010). A reworked translation has been published as a Penguin Classic: *Mo Zi: The Book of Master Mo* (London: Penguin, 2013).
2. See Yi-pao Mei, *The Ethical and Political Works of Motse: Translated from the Original Chinese Text* (London: Arthur Probsthain, 1929; various reprints), also republished with the Chinese original text and a modern Chinese translation under the title *The Works of Motze* (Taipei: Confucius Publications, 1980; various reprints); Burton Watson, *Mo-tzu: Basic Writings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963); and Angus Graham, *Later Mohist Logic, Ethics, and Science* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press and School of Oriental and African Studies, 2003; first published in 1978).
3. Riegel seems to rely on Stephen Durrant's "The Taoist Apotheosis of Mo Ti," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 97.4 (1977): 540–546.
4. Neither Sima Qian (*Shiji* 74:2350) nor Liu Xiang, nor any other early author provided information on the *Mozi*'s structure, length, chapter titles, author(s), and even its existence.
5. There is hardly any evidence to substantiate this hypothesis. Riegel refers to one line from the *Shiji Suoyin* 史記索隱 by the Tang scholar Sima Zhen (679–732), which he wrongly locates in *Shiji* 73 "Bai qi wang jian liezhuan" (p. 15 n. 68).
6. For the "Fei gong" 非攻 triad, see page 34 versus page 169; for "Jie zang" 節葬, see page 34 versus page 201. In all these cases, my interpretation of Watanabe's view is closer to Riegel's table 3 (pp. 34–35) than to the introductory sections of the various triads. See Carine Defoort and Nicolas Standaert, "Introduction: Different Voices in the *Mozi*: Studies of an Evolving Text," in *The Mozi as an Evolving Text: Different Voices in Early Chinese Thought* (Boston: Brill, 2013), pp. 1–24, esp. p. 15.